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## MLGPA News (May 1998)

Betsy Smith

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# MLGPA News

Politics, Education, Outreach

P.O. Box 232, Hallowell, ME 04347-0232

May 1998

## **Ideas!! Brainstorms!! Proposals!!**

### **Information Being Generated in Statewide Meetings**

As MLGPA continues to travel across the state holding community meetings, we will be publicizing the results as promised. Thus far we have had three meetings—Ogunquit, Portland, and Augusta—all of which have been well attended by many familiar faces. We have been very excited to see many new faces as well, as one of our goals has been to get more people involved in statewide organizing.

Although our findings will not be officially evaluated until the end of the series of meetings, we want to share some information from each meeting as we go along. The first, held in Ogunquit on March 8, was a trial run. After the meeting, we determined that the format we had chosen was inappropriate, so with input from the Ogunquit folks, we reworked it to make it much more effective. We now begin by having individuals state what they want to get out of the meeting. We then meet in small groups, in which everyone has an opportunity to participate. The topics are determined by the interests expressed by participants at the start of the meeting. We brainstorm and discuss our vision for

the state of Maine over the next year or two and then report back to the large group.

For the findings of each meeting, please see the enclosed insert. The remaining meetings are scheduled as follows:

- ▼ Belfast—April 25, 10am–12:30pm, Belfast Free Library, High Street. If you would like to stay for lunch after the meeting, please contact Mitzi Litchman at 338-5889 or by e-mail at: mitzijoy@agate.net..
- ▼ Ellsworth—May 9, 10am–1pm, UU Church. Pot luck lunch at about 12:30.
- ▼ Bangor—May 9, 4–6pm, Peace and Justice Center of Eastern Maine. For directions contact Janet May at 862-5907.
- ▼ Caribou—May 17, 12:30–2:30pm, at the Community Services Center of Northern Maine, 658 Main Street.
- ▼ Lewiston—May 30, time and location TBA. Call the MLGPA office (1-800-55MLGPA for updated information).

## **Maine Diversity Alliance Sets Date for Board Election**

Maine Diversity Alliance, the 501c3 non-profit offshoot of MLGPA, will have its first official meeting on Wednesday, May 20, 7–9pm, in Portland at the Peace and Justice Center of Southern Maine, 1 Pleasant Street, 2nd floor. This is the same building which houses the MLGPA office.

The meeting is open to everyone, and we encourage anyone interested to attend. After discussing the general mission of the new organization, we will elect Board members (anyone may run for a position) and craft a mission statement. Following approval of the mission statement, we will get an update on the Maine Anti-Violence Project (already in process), discuss new ideas, and determine a schedule for the next three months.

In establishing this organization, one of MLGPA's visions has been for it to be staffed and to concentrate its efforts on community and coalition building, networking, education, outreach, and grassroots organizing. The Maine Diversity Alliance has the potential to be a statewide umbrella organization which exists to support the current and future efforts of both statewide and local organizing projects. The actual goals and work of the Alliance will be determined by the new Board of Directors, which is designed to be inclusive and accessible.

Please join this exciting new organization as we seek to pave a new way to the future. For more information, please contact Betsy Smith at 851-3741.



# MLGPA

Politics, Education,  
Outreach

## Executive Committee:

Betsy Smith  
*President*

Dan Stevens  
*Vice President*

Thomas A. Little, C.P.A.  
*Treasurer*

Tom Coffin  
*Recording Secretary*

Judy Edgerly

Julie Rothrock

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## Board Members:

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David Garrity

Jennifer Goldman

Celeste Gosselin

Rick Gowen

Sara Hanna

Brian Kaufman

P.J. Mears

Teague Morris

Erik Richard

Mark Sullivan

## Executive Volunteers:

Maggie Allen

Sam Sherman

## Mailing Address:

PO Box 232  
Hallowell, ME 04347-0232

## e-mail:

mlgpa@javanet.com

## Office Telephone:

1-800-556-5472  
761-3732 (in Portland)

# Maine Women's Lobby— A Voice for Equality

In May 1997, MLGPA applied for and received a \$5,000 grant from the Maine Community Foundation to implement a hate crimes program. The program, now called the Maine Anti-Violence Project, is underway.

Because MLGPA had not yet secured its 501c3 non-profit status in 1997, we asked the Maine Women's Lobby (and its 501c3 organization—the Women's Development Institute) to act as our fiscal sponsor, the agency to which the funds are allocated. A fiscal sponsor is ultimately responsible and accountable for the appropriate use of the funding. Without the generous help of the Maine Women's Lobby, MLGPA would not have been able to secure the funding necessary to develop this hate crimes prevention program, which is aimed at making life safer for LGBT individuals.

In return for their generosity, MLGPA would like to showcase the successes and opportunities of the Maine Women's Lobby, in the hope that you will support the Lobby by becoming a member. Founded in 1978, the Maine Women's Lobby has been a strong voice in Augusta for women and girls. They have fought to protect women's rights and promote equality, and to ensure freedom of choice and the right for women to direct their own lives. Just last year, the Maine Women's Lobby defeated all eight anti-choice bills in the Legislature.

In addition, the Lobby was instrumental in helping to pass LD 1116, An Act to Prevent Discrimination, the bill that would have finally made it illegal to discriminate based on sexual orientation. The Maine Women's Lobby has lobbied on behalf of gay, lesbian, and bisexual citizens for years. At our annual banquet in February 1997, MLGPA honored Laura Fortman, executive director for the Maine Women's Lobby, with a community service award for her universal and unending dedication to the LGBT community.

Please become a member of the Maine Women's Lobby and help them

continue their exceptional success on behalf of all Maine women and girls.

This year marks the Maine Women's Lobby's 20th anniversary. Please join them for their celebration dinner on May 14, 6-9pm, at the Radisson Eastland Hotel in Portland. An exciting slate of Courage Award recipients are the event of the evening, along with Honorary Chair, Speaker of the House Elizabeth Mitchell. For reservations please send a check for \$40 to the Maine Women's Lobby, PO Box 15, Hallowell, ME 04347. For more information, contact the Lobby at 207-622-0851 or by e-mail at MWomenL@aol.com.

# Hate Crimes Project Up and Running

More than a dozen people attended the April 2nd meeting of the new Hate Crimes project. Sam Sherman, project coordinator, kicked off the meeting with a creative exercise in which participants visualized the needs and goals for the project. A number of important needs and objectives were identified, both general and specific. Two primary needs identified were connecting LGBT people with existing resources and developing needed services.

Some of the specific needs discussed included the following: to learn how to recognize a hate crime, to know how to protect oneself, to know one's rights and what to do if one is a victim, a statewide, toll-free hotline service to provide support and care for victims, increased reporting and better tracking of anti-LGBT bias crime, protections from LGBT discrimination, coalitions to work against bias crime, and public education on bias crime.

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Come Join Outright in Celebrating  
our 10th Anniversary

## *Summer Nights Prom*

**Who:** GLBTQ youth, youth allies, and those  
who respect youth safety and age  
boundaries

**Where:** Holiday Inn By the Bay  
88 Spring Street, Portland

**When:** Saturday, May 9th  
8:00 PM to Midnight

**What to wear:** Semi-formal

**How much:** \$10 per person

***Please RSVP by Friday, April 24th.  
Tickets will also be available at the door.***

*Yes, there will be food.  
Yes, there will be beverages.  
Yes, it will be chem-free.*

Questions? Call (207) 773-1229



## Findings from MLGPA Community Meetings

**Ogunquit, March 8:** more local involvement, develop a voter list, local individuals ask for and share info, decentralize - move MLGPA meetings around to other places (a concept we are considering - taking the Board meetings "on the road"), don't use urban models - Maine is too spread out, more people in decision making roles, more coalition building with straight allies, create a structure for communicating to everybody's list, plan now - develop and keep ownership in the community, run for school board, become known, initiate a York County support organization, more meetings with more opportunity to engage in the participatory process, organize forums, local control over local groups, strong centralized group to act as the HUB of the wheel, continue to challenge status quo i.e. assumed "leadership" and acceptance of "invite only," bring directives/initiatives of "the community" to the community instead of going to Portland or Augusta to make a statement, political action groups for each community to address issues with respect to local needs and environment, public service announcements, recognize that all ideas exist with or without Portland/out of state blessing/support, incorporate more local leaders, allow for different approaches, house parties, attend statewide meetings, welcome involvement - let all voices be heard, start a web page for community activities, rural organizing projects, more social activities in the years before we pass the next bill.

**Portland, March 16:** exclude civil rights from the referendum process, dissolve Maine Human Rights Act and pass a bill that includes all Maine citizens are protected from discrimination, make sure that protections for LGBT community includes education protection for youth, amend constitution so people's veto can only be used in general election, referendum initiated by citizens to be held in 2000, make the message of civil rights as opposed to GLBT rights, frame the issues ourselves - take the offensive - build moral authority, pass local ordinances in towns where they voted 2-1 or 3-1 on Feb 10, develop guidebook on how to pass and run a campaign for local ordinances, use local ordinances for tools for education and visibility, SAD 2000 (Straights Against Discrimination), phone tree to bring community closer, vision of an umbrella coalition with paid staff, assessment of community, become more aware of MLGPA board and by-laws, support the new non-profit organization - Maine Diversity Alliance, skill building trainings, BE OUT, more outreach, meet with local opponents, organize on a local level, community building workshops, develop a community center, newspaper/newsletter statewide commitment, real establishment of statewide structure, network across the state so we are and appear to be a cohesive community, ask people in rural communities what they need to teach, need to educate that it's not special rights, education needs to be non-judgemental, non-angry.

**Augusta, April 2:** seek information from the civil rights effort of the 60's and determine what tactics were effective in gaining rights for black people, establish a financial structure in every county so that counties are paying for local organizing, develop rural organizing with an umbrella group made up of representatives from each county, study and research the organizational challenge in front of us, how do we function in constant campaign mode with membership organizations still thriving, determine responsibilities of education versus campaign, focus less on gay rights more on civil rights, include legislature as we move forward, support legislators in reelection campaigns, include all churches and get them to mobilize their congregations, conduct a signature campaign in order to be proactive in our approach to civil rights, Christian definition needs to be reclaimed, build a unified mission within LGBT communities, recognize diversity & strength and build stronger coordinated effort without cross-products, be active in existing supportive organizations, need a big social change in two years (11/2000), implement non-discrimination policies by department, insurance coverage for domestic partners, paid staff for whole effort, community service efforts for support and visibility - visit nursing homes, road cleanup, neighbor help, fundraise for local groups - hold fun/educational houseparties for neighbors, come out, build local support teams, find way for everyone to know about our groups and resources, establish community centers, find local forums in which we can teach about our issues, put signs in businesses, find safe places to meet, implement an immediate response protocol for hate crimes with cards available, no more single issue referendum.



# Legislative Races Preparing for Fall Election

Although November may seem far away, Legislators are counting the months already. In just seven months, Maine citizens will elect the 119th Legislature. Many of the current legislators have been very supportive of the LGBT community and demonstrated their support by voting for LD 1116, the anti-discrimination bill that was passed in May 1997 and repealed on February 10.

It is in our very best interest to support the legislators who supported us and it is vital that we reelect those who will support us in the future, as we deal with issues of gay marriage, gay adoption and foster care, domestic partnership benefits, and most current in our minds—civil rights. MLGPA has made a commitment to provide volunteers for as many of the races as we can. We have worked for years to educate the Legislature about civil rights.

If you know your legislators are supportive of civil rights and are running again, please offer your services to their campaigns. If you need to know who your legislators are, please contact the MLGPA office at 1-800-55MLGPA.

## Hate Crimes Project

*Continued from Page 2*

The project is being supported by a \$5,000 award from the Maine Community Foundation and a \$2,500 individual contribution. Implementation of the project here in Maine will be partially based on work done in organizations across the country that have developed Anti-Violence Programs within the LGBT community, especially the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs. Hence, the project has been officially named the MAINE ANTI-VIOLENCE PROJECT for the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Community, or the Maine AVP for short.

Some of the immediate goals of the project include:

- ▼ To meet with a representative of the Attorney General's office to learn exactly what the Maine Civil Rights Act defines as a hate crime and what enforcement provisions and penalties it contains.
- ▼ To ask victim advocates with the victim recovery program at Boston's Fenway Community Health Center, to conduct a training program on the ways hate crimes affect the victims and what we can do to help them.
- ▼ To produce for distribution within the LGBT community in Maine, a "what to do if..." card, with simple legal and medical instructions on one side and information on the AVP and how to get involved with it on the reverse.

The next meeting of the Maine Anti-Violence Project is set for Tuesday, May 5th, 6:30pm, on the 2nd floor of the Peace & Justice Center at 1 Pleasant Street in Portland. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend.

We will print updated information in this newsletter as we move along in our candidate endorsement program. Official MLGPA endorsement will come toward the end of the summer.

## Vermont Moves Closer

The same-gender marriage recognition case in Vermont is moving rapidly toward a hearing in that state's Supreme Court. On March 6 lawyers for the three couples seeking protection from discriminatory marriage laws filed an appeal of a December 9th Superior Court ruling dismissing their case. While rejecting most of the state's justifications for discrimination in marriage, the Superior Court judge ruled the State's discrimination could be justified by the State's interest in "furthering the link between procreation and child-rearing."

In the 73-page brief the lawyers representing the three couples, including Mary Bonauto from Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD), argues that same gender couples bear and raise children, and denying those children the legal protections of civilly married parents goes against the state's best interests. They also argued that the fundamental right to marry the partner of one's choice has long been recognized and protected by courts in Vermont and around the country. GLAD's Mary Bonauto commented, "Marriage is not a zero sum proposition. Allowing Holly Puterbaugh and Lois Farnham to marry, after 25 years of committed union, won't take anything away from anyone else, but can only strengthen their family and the greater community."

The State is expected to respond with a brief of its own in mid-April, and the Vermont Supreme Court will likely schedule the case for oral arguments some time thereafter.





# Maine Rural Network for LGBTAs

Motivated by the lack of grassroots organizing in the state and a loss at the polls on February 10, the Maine Rural Network was born and bred. Rural organizers, frustrated with the lack of rural organizing, have taken it upon themselves to establish what appears to be missing in this state—a resource for learning about rural organizing.

The vision for the Maine Rural Network, a brainchild of Naomi Falcone of Standish, is to network individuals in rural areas and supply them with the skills to organize locally. Operating under the knowledge that urban strategies don't work well in rural settings, Naomi and supporters have established a network that is reaching out to all interested individuals in any part of Maine who want to be connected with and learn from a group who is experienced in rural organizing. Taking its lead from the Rural Organizing Project of Oregon, the Maine Rural Network is already offering workshops on organizing and networking tactics.

Its first regional workshop will be held on Saturday, May 9, at Colby College in Waterville, from 9:30am–3:30pm. There will be an assortment of workshops and

individuals from other states will be there to provide information on how their rural organizing projects got underway and how best to proceed.

Organizers of the Maine Rural Network have identified some first steps to take in order to reach and empower rural gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people: 1) provide opportunities for people to discuss their rural queer experiences and to develop ways to reach out to their neighbors; 2) develop small but visible projects to give or do something to benefit the whole community; 3) join with other groups to work on shared problems of social and economic justice; and 4) hold local forums to educate people about queer issues.

MLGPA is excited to learn about the Maine Rural Network, knowing that with many groups working together, we will attain our goals faster and more effectively. When the next campaign develops, the Maine Rural Network will most likely play a crucial role in mobilizing its network. For more information on MRN and the workshop on May 9, please contact Naomi Falcone at 642-2015 or e-mail at: nomad@watchic.net.

## Calendar of Events

April 25—MLGPA Community Meeting in Belfast, 10am–1pm, Belfast Free Library, High Street, FMI contact MLGPA at 1-800-55MLGPA.

May 2—4th Annual AIDS Benefit to Celebrate Life, 6:30pm, Caribou Inn and Convention Center, FMI contact Cathy Bohls at 768-3056.

May 3—Maine AIDS Walk '98, sponsored by the Merry-meeting AIDS Support Services, FMI call 725-4955.

May 5—Maine Anti-Violence Project's 2nd meeting, 6:30pm, Peace and Justice Center 2nd floor, Portland, FMI contact MLGPA at 1-800-55MLGPA.

May 8–10—Gay Men Together Spring Retreat 1998, "Community Building: Moving Towards the 21st Century," FMI write GMT, 10 Cattail Lane, Alfred, ME 04002.

May 9—MLGPA Community Meeting in Ellsworth, 10am–1pm, UU Church, FMI contact MLGPA at 1-800-55MLGPA.

May 9—MLGPA Community Meeting in Bangor, 4–6pm, Peace and Justice Center of Eastern Maine, FMI contact MLGPA at 1-800-55MLGPA.

May 9—Maine Rural Network Organizing Workshop, 9:30am–3:30pm, Colby College in Waterville, FMI contact Naomi Falcone at 642-2015 or e-mail at: nomad@watchic.net.

May 9—Outright's Summer Nights Prom (see insert), 8pm–midnight, Holiday Inn By the Bay, Portland, \$10 per person, FMI contact Outright at 828-6560 or 1-888-567-7600.

May 14—Maine Women's Lobby 20th Anniversary Celebration, 6–9pm, Radisson Eastland Hotel in Portland, FMI contact MWL at 207-622-0851 or by e-mail at: MWomenL@aol.com.

May 20—Maine Diversity Alliance Meeting, Election of Board Members, 7–9pm, 2nd floor of the Peace and Justice Center in Portland, FMI contact MLGPA at 1-800-55MLGPA.

May 21—MLGPA monthly Board Meeting, 6–9pm, Maine Education Association Building, Augusta. Everyone welcome. FMI contact MLGPA at 1-800-55MLGPA.

May 23–25—Symposium XXIV, University of Maine at Farmington, workshops, keynote address by Paul Fuller, concert, dance, networking. FMI call 207-862-2063 or e-mail: sympos@hamtel.tds.net

May 27—MLGPA Legislative Committee Meeting, 6–8pm, Maine Education Association Building in Augusta.

June 19–21—Southern Maine Pride Weekend, keep your eyes posted here.

July 11—Bangor Pride, FMI contact Taylor at Visions at 990-4772.